

**Town of Smithfield
Planning Board Minutes
Thursday, March 2nd, 2023
Town Hall Council Chambers
6:00 PM**

Members Present:

Chairman Mark Lane
Vice-Chairman Debbie Howard
Alisa Bizzell
Brian Stanley
Doris Wallace

Members Absent:

Ashley Spain
Wiley Narron

Staff Present:

Stephen Wensman, Planning Director
Mark Helmer, Senior Planner
Julie Edmonds, Administrative Support Specialist

Staff Absent:

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Debbie Howard made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Doris Wallace. Unanimously approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES for February 2nd, 2023

Doris Wallace made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Alisa Bizzell. Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

ZA-23-02 Town of Smithfield: The applicant is requesting an amendment to Unified Development Ordinances, Article 7, Section 7.3 to allow two accessory structures per residential lot.

Mark Helmer stated that Planning staff is requesting the Planning Board recommend approval of an ordinance amendment to allow two accessory structures per residential lot. In 2001, the Town Council approved allowing 2 accessory structures on lots greater than ½ acre in the R-20A district in conjunction with updates to 160D. Recently, the Council requested staff to consider another amendment for accessory structures to extend the allowance to all residential lots. The opinion of the Council was that many residential properties already have 2 accessory structures and those following the rules were only limited to one. Also, many homes in Smithfield lack a garage leaving homeowners limited storage space. The existing exemption for pool houses not exceeding 150 sq. ft. and granny pods not exceeding 300 sq. ft. will remain. An accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) in the R-20A zoning district will be considered one of the two allowed accessory structures if it is a free-standing structure and not included within another. The number of accessory structures on a lot may be limited because of impervious surface limits on some platted lots, septic system conflicts, or setbacks. All accessory structures will still require a zoning permit from the Town and those over

200 sq. ft. will require a building permit from Johnston County Inspections. Staff finds the zoning text amendment as proposed consistency with the Town of Smithfield Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and other adopted plans, and that the amendment is reasonable and in the public interest.

Debbie Howard made a motion to recommend approval of zoning text amendment, ZA-23 -02 amending Section 7.3 to allow 2 accessory structures per residential lot finding the amendment consistent with the Town of Smithfield Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and other adopted plans, and that the amendment is reasonable and in the public interest; seconded by Doris Wallace. Unanimously approved.

CA-23-03 Town of Smithfield: The applicant is requesting an amendment to the Smithfield Town Plan that adopts a new volume titled Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan.

Stephen Wensman stated The Town Plan, adopted in 2020, included a recommendation that the Town pursue a Pedestrian Plan through the NCDOT Pedestrian Planning Grant Program. The Town Council adopted a Resolution of Support for a grant application on 07/09/2019. NCDOT awarded the Town a grant and assigned AECOM to prepare the plan. The draft plan is the culmination of a planning process to improve pedestrian safety, connectivity, health and wellbeing through recommended infrastructure projects and community policies and programs. This effort was led by the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) Integrated Mobility Division (IMD), AECOM as the project consultant, and the locally appointed Steering Committee. With the adoption of the Pedestrian Plan, the Town will be well positioned to pursue funding opportunities with NCDOT for pedestrian projects. The Plan will also help the Town prioritize its spending on pedestrian facility projects.

Debbie Howard asked if there would ever be a pedestrian walk from Little Brown Jug to Hwy 70? Stephen Wensman said the Town just applied for a CMAQ grant. If it is approved, the Town will build a trail from the bridge to Wilson's Mills Rd. Stephen Wensman said that DOT has a complete street program. That means they will put in the trails and pedestrian amenities and not at the Town's cost. DOT will cover all costs but it has to be shown on the comp plan. This will essentially be an addendum to the comp plan. Doris Wallace asked why the trail was stopping at Wilson's Mills Rd when you have all the homes that go down Market Street? Stephen Wensman said we're building from the downtown outward and that's a busy road. He stated he knew it was difficult to get down Wilson's Mills Rd and Hwy 70, But we have to start somewhere. That's as much funding as the Town could secure for a trail at this time.

Debbie Howard made a motion to recommend the Town Council adopt the Pedestrian Plan; seconded by Alisa Bizzell. Unanimously approved

Old Business

Stephen Wensman brought up the street tree ordinance concerning landscaping trees across Town. He stated some of them are being cut down too far until they resemble shrubs. Our ordinance states you need to maintain your landscaping but it doesn't indicate how. He suggested to the Planning Board that some language be crafted for regulated commercial landscaping.

Mark Helmer stated that the Planning Department has been trying to make changes to the sign code. The last variance that came to us was a recommendation that we change the ordinance to allow for more signage. We now allow signs on all street fronts. We allow wall signs on all sides of the building that have public parking. We place a limit on the maximum number of signs to 4 per property. He asked the board if they wanted to do away with the quantity of signs and just regulate by the total square footage. It gives businesses more flexibility. The Planning Board was in agreement to come back with an ordinance to change the sign code.

Stephen Wensman stated RV's as temporary housing is intended for emergency use in our code but it isn't written well. A few citizens have requested this and it's been difficult to say no. An emergency should consist of a flood or fire, something that's out of the person's control. We can bring this back to the board at a later date.

Stephen Wensman said there is also concern about vehicles parking on the grass in their front yards. He asked the boards opinion about this. Bryan Stanley asked how it would be enforced? Debbie Howard suggested that a provision be placed in the code that parking must be on an approved surface such as gravel or a concrete pad. We can always keep this issue in mind and revisit this later.

Stephen Wensman said another issue is proactive rezonings. Essentially someone wanting to do a manufactured home on an R-20A lot which is surrounded by R-8 lot and manufactured homes are only allowed in R-20A districts. This is something to consider later, but he isn't ready to create an ordinance.

Adjournment

Being no further business, Alisa Bizzell made a motion seconded by Doris Wallace to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,



Julie Edmonds
Administrative Support Specialist